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ABSTRACT

According to this summary report, the State of Wisconsin has been guided by 3 goals in planning education programs for migrant children: (1) to increase familiarity of the school staff with the problems and needs of migrant children, (2) to develop a curriculum emphasizing communication skills, and (3) to build a school environment which facilitates development of communication skills. The report outlines in-service training activities for teachers of migrant students and identifies 10 special needs of these students: (1) a sense of belonging, (2) enriched learning experiences, (3) opportunities to explore the arts, (4) verbal practice in English, (5) a knowledge of Spanish, (6) practice in listening, (7) opportunities to explore vocational interests, (8) health care, (9) family-school cooperation, and (10) continuity of school records. A disucssion of programs and activities developed by the schools to meet each of these needs is presented. A map of Wisconsin showing the location and name of existing migrant schools is also included. (TL)

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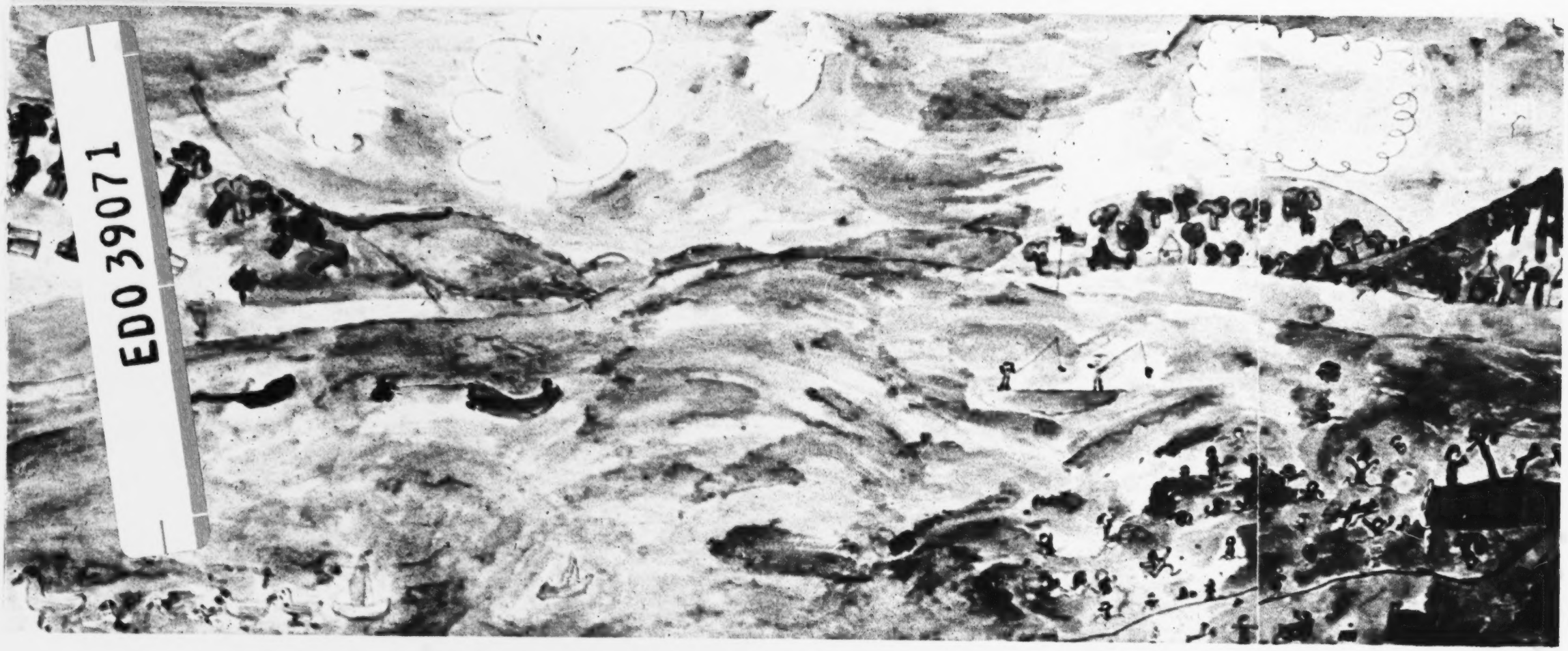

Migrant children in Wisconsin

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Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
William C. Kahl, State Superintendent

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find schools
where they can
express themselves by speaking,
dancing, painting and playing;
where teachers are listening
to hear who the children are.

Introduction

The migratory family – moving from state to state, singly or in groups, in cars, trucks or buses – has created a unique life style as it adapts to the unpredictable agricultural labor conditions across the country. Migratory and seasonal workers with their children have been coming to Wisconsin since the 1940's to plant, cultivate, harvest and process the fruit and vegetable crops vital to the economy of the state.

In addition to making an economic contribution in Wisconsin, the migratory workers share a rich folk culture including close family ties and representative expressions in dance, music and art. The migrant's positive economic role and his cultural uniqueness are constantly being challenged by acculturation pressures, by his own desire for a better way of life, and by the educational demands of a technological society. The clash of these factors – the force of tradition and the desire to prepare for the future – is inevitable. The migratory population thus becomes the topic of broad questions of national and local concern.

Part of Wisconsin's response to these questions is reflected in its approach to the education of the migrant child. To identify the educational needs of the child. it is first necessary to account for the major conflicts which face him.

As his family repeatedly moves on to seek short-term employment, the child is subjected to constant change and uncertainty, which may affect him both positively and negatively. On the one hand, he enjoys the personal security of strong family bonds. He is flexible in meeting new situations. He is skilled in hoeing, harvesting, or in other functions of field labor.

On the other hand, he lacks continuity in his education – the factor which accounts for a

weakness in his English-oriented communications skills. At times he sits apart from others in a class – victimized by impatient teachers who are distressed by his transiency. He further grows to resent the established schools as places where he fails and spends unpleasant days between migrations.

The Wisconsin approach has evolved with a view to preserving each child's unique cultural heritage while offering him choices for enrichment within child-centered school programs. The emphasis is on creating a positive learning environment in which the school is concerned with the immediate presence of the child.

It is unrealistic for the school to demand or anticipate long-range changes in the student's life style or abilities when he may be in attendance for only one day or for six weeks. The Wisconsin plan stresses that children, no matter what their attendance records, need and thrive upon activities which reaffirm their identity as individuals. The goals of the local schools must shift, then, from the future, or from what might be achieved through extended contact with the child, to the learning possibilities of the present.

The state assumes that although making the present moment important for the child is the central aim, the local programs will also be fulfilling more specific, skill-oriented goals at the same time. Schools are urged to avoid rote memorization drills, basal readers, coloring on mimeographed sheets, and activities which confine students to classrooms and desks. Children should be afforded a maximum of freedom – freedom from bells, from rigid schedules, from academic competition, standardized tests and report cards – and consequently, freedom to experiment, to explore, to choose and to grow.

Green Lake

To strengthen the capacity of all summer program staff for creating such an environment, in-service training sessions have become a major element of the Wisconsin approach to migratory education. The pre-summer school conferences, held in Green Lake, Wisconsin, involve administrators, teachers and teacher aides in self-examination and curriculum building exercises.

For most staff members the Green Lake conference is synonymous with rigorous activity, in which adults are asked to respond and grow as, hopefully, their students will in the summer sessions. In addition to emphasizing participatory learning experiences, the workshops have been carefully designed to provide a method for staff and program self-renewal.

The need for constant personal and program evaluation is stressed through a range of demonstration classes, discussions of films, creative rhythmic activities, training in non-verbal communication, staff introspection, team building, and curriculum development tasks. When self-aware staff members review and improve their programs, their students benefit directly from the 'Green Lake philosophy.'

After three Green Lake conferences, each aimed at stimulating teachers to reinterpret their educator roles and to simultaneously re-work curriculum activities, a common, state-wide attitude toward migrant education is evolving.

At the local level, the recognized needs and the obvious promise of migratory children have given rise, over a three-year period, to specific objectives and to a variety of curriculum options and approaches. The compiled lists are not intended to introduce uniformity into the local programs, but rather to inspire experimentation and diversity. It is impossible to evaluate the degree of openness and creativity which teachers have brought to the activities, just as it is impossible to measure the progress of children in exploring, learning and growing. With these vital elements missing, however, the programs could not have functioned productively.

The children's needs

Sense of belonging

With the fragmentation of their school experiences, migratory children need to feel a sense of belonging in the educational program of the local schools.

Always with some variation from school to school, the Wisconsin summer Title I migrant programs have:

- offered a bilingual approach to communication skills.
- included teacher aides of Mexican-American background. Such individuals became positive role models for the children.
- substituted familiar Spanish names for non-identification names in stories and reading exercises. For example, Jack and Jill became Jose and Lupe.
- invited children to take an active part in planning the day's program.
- encouraged children to 'Sign Up Here' for their choice of free-time activities.
- begun each day with the director playing the piano; answering children's requests for songs, marches, and creative dramatics.
- provided for individual responsibilities such as watering plants, passing out napkins and snacks.
- emphasized non-graded grouping and individualized instruction.

Learning experiences

Migratory children need enriched real-life learning experiences in school.

To this end, teachers in the Wisconsin summer Title I migrant programs have;

- considered field trips to be essential in their total programs.
- used field trips as the springboard for classroom activities aimed at verbalization, reading and writing.
- explored creative art projects as extensions of well-planned field trips.
- given children activity options which correspond to their abilities.
- capitalized on moon exploration to develop space projects by: building a full scale cardboard rocket, dramatizing a moon shot, designing personalized rocket chambers, tape-recording commentary of an imagined moon trip, reporting the details of an imagined moon trip for class newspaper coverage.
- coordinated activities around a central theme for the day: pirate day, circus day, cowboy day.
- used the immediate environment to develop units of study such as: visiting a dairy farm studying milk products, making butter.
- introduced children to community services by visiting the following local agencies: the newspaper, the fire station, the public library, the post office, and the police station.
- planned a single large scale activity to develop academic, motor, and social skills by producing a daily newspaper of school activities, building 'A'-frame dog houses for commercial sale, building 'A'-frame play houses for use in the labor camp, constructing a float to celebrate a community's centennial, organize overnight camping trips, planned outdoor nature study using the scientific method and taught children to make fishing poles for fishing trips.

About the rocket

by Jo Ann Perez

Our class made a rocket. We painted it too, with black paint and it has three yellow stripes. We made our own room where we can stay and we have our own suit and it has food in plastic. In the plastic they got cheese and cake, spinach and meat too. The astronauts that are going are Eloisa, Lori, Lee, Tina Henry, Pete, Johnny, Linda and Jo Ann. Astronaut Mr. Tom is guiding the flight of the U.S.A. spaceship from the earth.

Exploring the arts

Migratory children need the opportunity to explore the universal languages of art, music, drama, recreation, and physical education.

Wisconsin schools have:

- employed specialists in art, music, and drama – an arts team – to inject new ideas and techniques into the local programs.
- explored a wide range of media: clay, textiles, tissue, plaster, crayon, paint, water-color, finger paint, play dough, papier-mache, wire, and wood.
- sought to develop interest in music through rhythm instruments, autoharps, resonator bells, the piano, and rhythmic games and activities.
- planned music listening and used music to inspire free painting expression.
- incorporated costuming, set-design and construction with performances of short, familiar stories.
- used drama first as a basic, non-verbal approach to communication, and later as a refined verbal approach.
- emphasized motor development as a necessary prerequisite to reading skill.
- included swimming instruction in the weekly schedule.
- had regular daily recreation periods.

Verbal practice in English

Migratory children need verbal practice in the English language.

The teachers have:

- tape-recorded narratives of children relating significant memories of field-trips and other activities.
- taught letter writing, with teachers acting as secretaries for children.
- joined the children in making up riddles from real life situations.
- given children dramatics classes. First pantomime and motion to music; later short, spontaneous play-acting based on stories told or read.
- combined puppet construction with puppet shows in which children composed their own dialogue, or paraphrased a favorite story and spoke through their puppets.
- stressed small group involvement to encourage each child's response.
- borrowed telephone units to simulate telephone conversational settings.
- made masks along with the children through which the latter gave themselves new roles, new contexts for expressing themselves.

Knowledge of Spanish

Since many of the migratory children come from Spanish-speaking backgrounds, they need the opportunity to expand their knowledge of Spanish.

Wisconsin teachers have:

- labeled objects in the school with both Spanish and English words.
- given routine directions in both Spanish and English.
- sung Spanish songs, introduced by aides, teachers, and children.
- had Spanish readers available.
- asked children to teach Spanish to teachers and to non-Spanish speaking children, and to act as translators.
- scheduled Spanish language classes into the school day.
- relied on children to compose bilingual messages for notes from the class to their families.

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Practice in listening

To improve their preparation for learning English, migratory children need practice in listening for sound patterns and intonations.

The children have:

- listened to musical instrument sounds.
- played records which rely on their participation in response to various sounds.
- performed exercises in which they could recognize the difference between organized sound and random noise.
- used commercial sensory perception kits.
- practiced choral speaking and reading exercises.
- participated in parroting and puppetry games.
- identified common sounds from tape recordings.
- listened to nature sounds and attempted mimicry.
- used 'teachable moments' – mealtime, bus-riding – to speak and sing in English.

Exploring vocational interests

Adolescent boys and girls need to explore activities which might give direction to their vocational or avocational interests.

Some Wisconsin schools have:

- conducted sewing and cooking classes in response to student request.
- given lessons in guitar and in other popular instruments.
- offered driver education – both behind-the-wheel and classroom instruction.
- provided typing instructions and facilities.
- introduced teenagers to practical auto-mechanics.
- provided courses in wood-working, especially in using the lathe.
- established leather-craft classes.
- given lessons in English as a foreign language.
- made art facilities available to teen-age students.
- employed and trained Mexican-American teenagers as aides in the programs for younger children.

Staying in good health

The health needs of migratory children should be a concern of educators.

With some variation, Wisconsin programs have:

- acted as referral agencies when health problems were observed.
- employed a physician for complete health examinations.
- worked in cooperation with public health nurses for frequent observation of children's health conditions.
- examined the hearing and vision of all children, and made recommendations for treatment when necessary.
- distributed health kits containing basic hygiene articles.
- offered a balanced diet for children while they are in school.
- taken children to hospitals and dentists' offices as instructional field trips.
- introduced basic health practices such as hand washing and nail cleaning before meals.

Family - school cooperation

The programs for migratory children need to maintain contact with the migrant family so that they can complement the entire learning experience in the home.

Most Wisconsin programs:

- employ a Spanish speaking person to make initial contacts with the family and to enroll the children.
- plan fiestas which include children's performances and exhibits and activities for the entire family.
- invite parents to prepare Mexican-American foods for a school supper.
- encourage staff members to visit the families in the camps on an informal basis.
- distribute kits containing tapes, tape-recorders and other instructional materials to be shared by families in their homes.

Maintaining school records

An additional need, that of providing some continuity of record keeping among migratory programs, has concerned many Wisconsin schools.

In cooperation with the U. S. Office of Education, Wisconsin introduced, in 1969, a uniform migrant student transfer form which eventually may serve to bridge communication gaps among the child's schools.

Diversity - Key to meeting needs

The other stated needs of migratory children have been constant, yet how they have been met has depended largely on the character of each of the local centers. In some cases, the implications of the goal of making the present significant for each child has been challenged by local teachers. The objections have not been specifically directed at the stated goal, but more to the resultant personal and program adjustment which might be necessary to fulfill it. Such teachers prefer more standard, structured learning situations which reinforce their own training and experience in education.

Since no definitive test evidence supports the activity centered method more than the traditional reader-workbook techniques as being more effective in migratory education, it is difficult to impose either on a local staff. However, observations indicate that the migratory child responds more positively to activities which are fun and engrossing, and which he succeeds in affecting through his participation. More important to the child than the particular skill at hand are the subtle, personal interactions in the teaching-learning atmosphere.

Thus it is the nature of the learning climate and the development of activity centered education which will continue to be stressed in the Wisconsin approach. Hopefully, the tone and intent of this attitude toward migratory education will have some impact on the greater problem of the lack of flexibility and innovation in the total public educational system.

Conclusion

In planning education programs for migratory children, Wisconsin has had three goals:

To increase the awareness of the staff working with migrant children that the quality of human relationship which takes place within the classroom and the mutual respect between adults and children determine motivation and interest for learning.

To develop a curriculum in which the major emphasis would be communication skills. These skills encompass listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

To build a school environment which facilitates the development of communication skills. Such an environment must be compatible with the background and experiences of the migrant children.

Staff Awareness

Increased awareness demands self-appraisal or introspection. Before one can assess the external situation he must be aware of his own biases, prejudices and intolerances. This self-appraisal results in a less distorted view of the external environment.

This view exposes the academic deficits of migrant children as manifestations of larger, more basic problems. Rather than seeing 'A Migrant Problem,' one sees the conditions in society which have produced children who do not function adequately in school.

Sensitive staff members develop a classroom climate free from threat and comfortable for learning. The first concern is to remove the conditions in the classroom which make the migrant child feel unsure or inadequate. With these barriers overcome, there are fewer obstructions in developing curriculum.

Curriculum Development

Assuming an aware and sensitive staff, the curriculum content can be developed. The sequence in which a communication skills program moves is important. Children with Spanish as their native language need first to feel comfortable and unthreatened in the free use of it. Spanish must be the base upon which to build facility in English. Relationships are drawn between similarities and differences in the sounds of the languages. After having developed, through much listening and speaking, an 'ear' for the second language, reading and writing are introduced.

An English communications program that builds on the skills which migrant children have in Spanish acknowledges the value of their language ability. It also accepts the values of the migrant family which has not been so intimidated by 'Anglo' culture as to give up a basic ingredient of its heritage--language. With this base, success is built into the curriculum.

School Environment

School environment is conditioned by the prevailing culture of our society. Some of the characteristics of our culture, which schools reflect, are competition, time schedules, reports, punctuality and protocol. For the majority of the school population these present little difficulty because most children come from homes that have indoctrinated them to accept this environment. But for migratory children many of these characteristics are alien. Their lives are not guided by time schedules and reports.

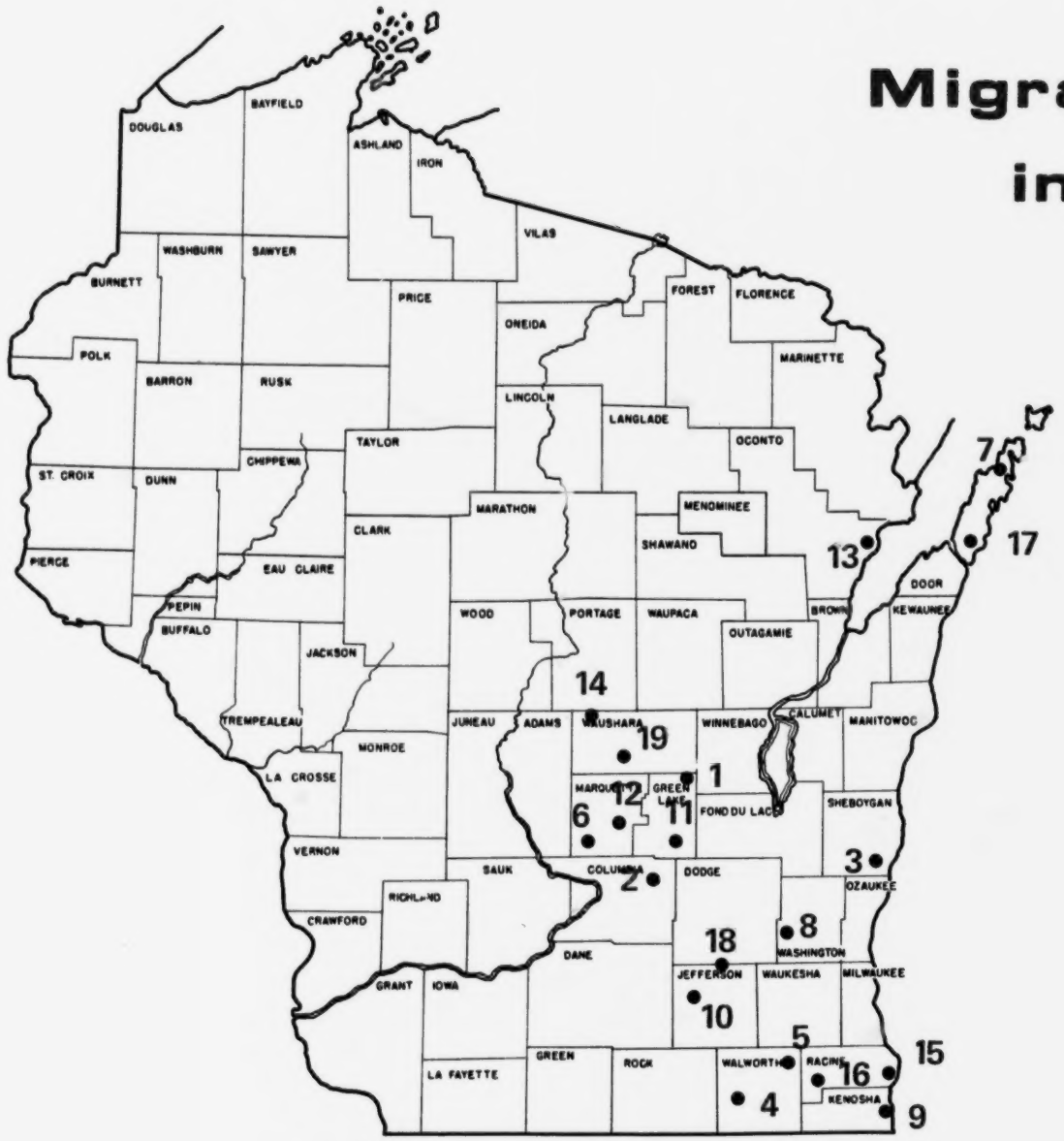
In order to meet the migrant child realistically, the school must be flexible enough to change its conditioned environment. . . .the introduction of English without environmental experience upon which school life is based . . .has fostered a generation functionally illiterate. . .[1]

Environmental change in migrant summer school programs is simplified because the usual conditions which immobilize a school are not as prevelant. The boundaries of the school can be extended into the community and children can experience and manipulate its resources.

After seeing, feeling, touching, in other words, experiencing, a direct and useful tie can be made between the communications skills being developed in the classroom. 'No amount of reading or talking about turtles can transmit the awareness of 'turtleness' that holding one can.'[2]

This publication has documented those activities which led toward the goals of Wisconsin's migrant education programs. Staff awareness was stressed in all pre-service workshops. Most local programs have an experientially based curriculum and as a result school environment has changed for migratory children. Local school leadership which encourages these approaches in education and allows staff the freedom to explore less traditional methods of learning makes a positive contribution to the lives of migratory children.

1. McWilliams, Cary, *North from Mexico,* 1947
2. Whitehead, A.N., *Aims of Education*



Migrant schools in Wisconsin

Summer 1969

1. Berlin
2. Cambria
3. Cedar Grove
4. Delavan
5. East Troy
6. Endeavor
7. Gibraltar
8. Hartford
9. Kenosha
10. Lake Mills
11. Markesan
12. Montello
13. Oconto
14. Plainfield
15. Racine
16. Rochester
17. Sevastopol
18. Watertown
19. Wautoma

Looking to the future

The Green Lake conference in 1970 will continue to stress interpersonal relationships among teaching-team members. At the same time staff members will consider developing teaching-learning units which draw from the environmental uniqueness of their own centers for motivation factors and for working materials.

There will be an initial conference of local program staff leaders at Green Lake to prepare them for their responsibilities in the summer migrant programs.

The portions of the Green Lake conference which deal exclusively with human relations will be optional for all staff members.

Health education for migrant children will be a major topic of discussion at the orientation session. Teams of public health representatives will act as consultants to the teaching staffs when they plan and carry out a health education program in their local schools during the summer months.

The local schools will be encouraged to employ art, music, and drama specialists for the summer programs to provide maximum opportunities for children to express themselves in each of these subjects.

Through speakers and workshops, the Green Lake conference will provide a background of the Mexican-American migrant community – life styles, social, and economic conditions.

Special emphasis will be placed on the use of existing teaching materials and of the environment as means to develop a successful language skills program.

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